

Lindsay Keeling (*she/her/hers*)

College of Health, Education, and Social Transformation

Master of Public Health | Master of Social Work

New Mexico State University, 2020-2023

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Kosovo, 2018-2020

December 15, 2022

Board of Directors and Committee Members

Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education

Dear Board of Directors and Members of the Review Committee:

My name is Lindsay Keeling and I am delighted to submit my application for the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship this year. I am a graduate student at New Mexico State University (NMSU) and am graduating May 2023 with dual masters in public health and social work. Like Dr. Mary K. Beyrer, I have enjoyed working within the field of health promotion from the micro to the macro level, and aspire to continue on this path and hope to pursue a doctoral degree in public health in the near future.

During my graduate studies, I have received two awards from the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) — one for research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and its association with suicidality, and another award to attend the annual advocacy summit, where I had the opportunity to meet with state representatives and advocate for H.B. Anti-Racism in Public Health Act. These opportunities allowed me to integrate my knowledge of public health from a policy and research perspective, but I have also been fortunate to engage in two year-long field practicums with the Las Cruces Fire Department's Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) team and with the Federal Public Defender in Las Cruces. Both of these settings may seem unusual for public health, but I have witnessed first-hand the enormous inequities and barriers created by our healthcare system through countless home visits with the MIH unit, as well as the harsh environments that impact incarcerated populations across the southern part of my state — where I visit clients weekly and learn about the lack of the most basic access to mental and physical health. I am currently advocating to bring capacitar training to our local jail; capacitar is a therapeutic modality for healing trauma. I also volunteer at Jardin de los Niños, an education program for children whose families are experiencing homelessness, where I teach trauma-informed kids' yoga every other week.

This Fall semester, I participated in and helped coordinate a Mental Health First Aid training with a group of 50 students that focused on suicide prevention. The peer training included certification in Mental Health First Aid and is one step that NMSU is taking towards educating students on signs of suicidality, and providing training on how to respond. In my application, I attached a video that was made about our training and a short interview with me (00:37-00:53). I have also served on the student organization for graduate level social work students since 2020, and have advocated for fairer housing policies as well as advocated for fair pay for graduate workers. In addition to advocacy work, I have a keen interest in working with vulnerable populations, ranging from folks experiencing homelessness to children living through trauma. I would love to become involved in policy work to try to help make a more monumental impact for these populations, but I also wish to continue with direct practice as I love connecting with people and hearing their stories. I have found New Mexico to be a very interesting state that has a deep need for the type of work public health professionals do, and I hope to repay the many opportunities I have been afforded here through continuing to serve in New Mexico for the foreseeable future.

My interest in public health became apparent to me during my time in the Peace Corps, where I lived and worked in a small village in the mountains of Kosovo. I was able to see how health promotion and education could shape the way people lived their lives and what a difference these discussions made. For the last several years, I have essentially lived on a shoestring budget, jumping from Peace Corps to graduate school, and have not been fortunate to have family support for many years. My mother passed away when I was 17 and she was my main caregiver, which has required me to navigate the different ways to finance my education for many years. While it has not been easy, I am eternally grateful for my education, and know my mother would be proud of me.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider my application for the Dr. Mary K. Beyrer student scholarship. I hope to be a qualified representative of this honor.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lindsay Keeling".

Lindsay Keeling